

Fitting Today's Commercial Development into Yesterday's Downtown: Exploring the Possibilities in Richmond's Village Commercial District

April 29, 1998

**Sponsored by the Vermont Section of the
American Society of Landscape Architects
in cooperation with the Vermont Planners Association
Hosted by the Town of Richmond Railroad Street Development Committee**



1998 Community Design Charrette Report

Fitting Today's Commercial Development into Yesterday's Downtown

Exploring the Possibilities in Richmond's Village Commercial District

Sponsored by the Vermont Section of the American Society of
Landscape Architects in cooperation with the Vermont Planners'
Association and hosted by the Town of Richmond, Vermont Railroad
Street Development Committee.

Report prepared by Nat Goodhue, Past President, Vermont ASLA and
Debra Heleba, Intern, University of Vermont, August 1998.

*This report documents the second annual community design charrette
held on Wednesday, April 29, 1998, focusing on the Railroad Street
commercial area of downtown Richmond, Vermont.*

*Fitting today's commercial development into yesterday's downtown is a
challenging opportunity that exists in many communities. It is an
alternative to other prevalent forms of commercial development that
have detracted from the vitality of yesterday's downtowns. Exploration
of the alternatives in Richmond is intended to produce ideas useful to
the many communities similar to Richmond as well as contribute to a
vision for Richmond's Railroad Street district.*

*To learn more about the design charrette or to find out how your
community could be involved with a charrette process, please contact
the Vermont Section of the American Society of Landscape Architects at
PO Box 4552, Burlington, Vermont 05406.*

1998 Design Charrette Organizing Committee

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Introduction

Charrette--a name derived from the cart that was used to collect the creations of multiple artists at the culmination of each assignment--has come to mean an intensive design session that brings together a multi-disciplined team to problem-solve and stimulate creative solutions in a short period of time. It is not a substitute for, but rather a point of departure for, the more analytical and comprehensive design process which must follow.

The second annual community design charrette was held on Wednesday, April 29, 1998 and focused on the Railroad Street commercial area of downtown Richmond, Vermont. More than 30 professionals--including landscape architects, planners, architects, economic development and municipality representatives, and the entire Richmond Selectboard--volunteered their time and expertise to explore alternative designs as well as contribute to visions for Richmond's Railroad Street district.

General Charrette Goal

Contribute to new employment opportunities, the economic success of business ventures, the vitality of downtown as the focal point of the community, and conservation of the surrounding rural farm and forest landscape.

Objectives

Town of Richmond:

- 1) Develop a vision for the largest undeveloped commercially zoned
- 2) Build on the ideas discussed at public meetings held in Richmond on October 14, 1997 and April 8, 1998;

- 3) Provide a point of departure for future detailed planning, design and economic development; and,
- 4) Use the charrette as a process guided by public input without found in state and local land use regulations.

Vermont ASLA:

- 1) Build on ideas discussed at the Vermont ASLA/VPA panel discussion (held at Norwich University on May 9, 1997) by developing designs that are economically successful and contribute to community character,
- 2) Demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of alternative commercial/mixed use schemes;
- 3) Develop a design that has the most advantages and the least disadvantages; and,
- 4) Demonstrate how the planning and design process can help a community achieve its goals.

Vermont Planners' Association:

- 1) Demonstrate "growth center" strategies; and
- 2) Apply provisions of the Downtown Community Development Act.

Site Selection

The Executive Committee of the Vermont ASLA approved a sequel to the 1997 Williston residential neighborhood charrette after receiving enthusiastic support for continuing to do a community outreach charrette each year. The second charrette was held in the Chittenden County town of Richmond with the focus on a downtown commercial/mixed use site.

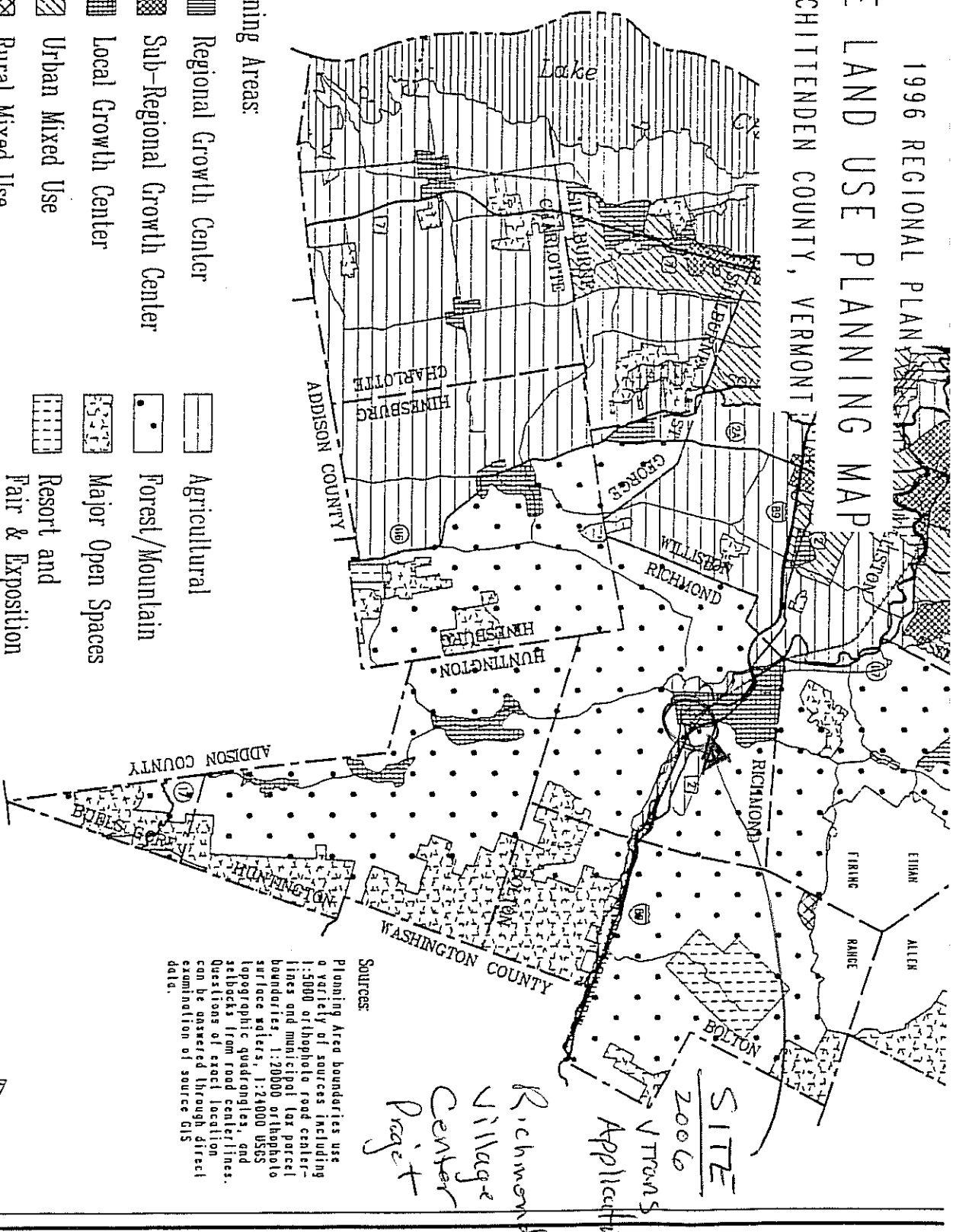
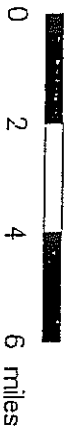
Richmond had recently adopted a new town plan (1997) and a new zoning ordinance (1996) which strive to perpetuate the "village area [as] the focus of the Town," encourage "the preservation of open spaces and viable farm and forest land" outside the village area, and avoid "the negative effects of...strip development."

1996 REGIONAL PLAN FUTURE LAND USE PLANNING MAP CHITTENDEN COUNTY, VERMONT



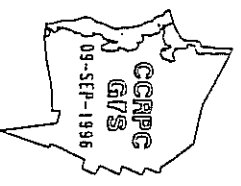
- Planning Areas:**
- Regional Growth Center
 - Sub-Regional Growth Center
 - Local Growth Center
 - Urban Mixed Use
 - Rural Mixed Use
 - Industrial/Commercial
 - Agricultural
 - Forest/Mountain
 - Major Open Spaces
 - Resort and Fair & Exposition
 - Public Use/Military Reservation

Shoreland: All land between the mean water mark of any lake, pond, or impoundment exceeding 20 acres, and a line between 500 and 1000 feet from the water mark. Also includes land within 100 feet from the top of the established banks of major streams.



Sources:
Planning Area boundaries use a variety of sources including 1:5000 orthophoto road centerlines and municipal lot parcel boundaries, 1:20000 orthophoto surface waters, 1:24000 USGS topographic quadrangles, and setbacks from road centerlines. Questions of exact location can be answered through direct examination of source GIS data.

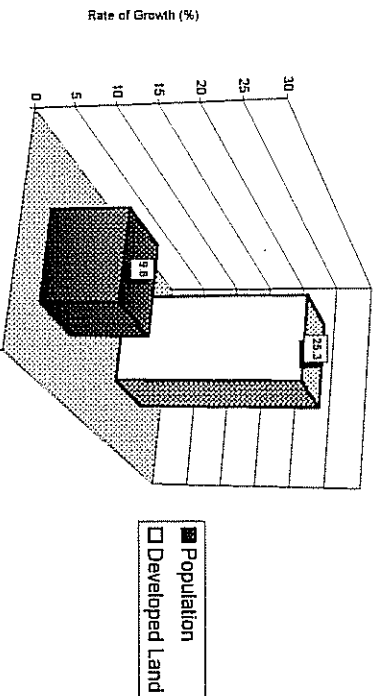
Richmond Village Center Project
2006
SITE
UTRANS
Application



Regional Context

Sprawl will destroy Vermont's unique character quickly as it has in so many other states if not addressed now. According to research cited by John Ewing of the Vermont Forum on Sprawl in his concluding remarks provide a context for the charrette. The following research results illustrate the importance of taking immediate action. Between 1982 and 1992, Vermont's population grew by 9.8% but developed land grew by 25.3%, two and one-half times the rate of population growth. Vermont is losing open land quickly to a sprawl pattern of development.

Rates of Growth in Population and Developed Land
Vermont 1982 - 1992



Sprawl must be addressed at the state, regional, and town levels, as well as by the private sector. There must be opportunities to for all of these levels to work collaboratively if Vermont is going to preserve a compact settlement surrounded by rural working landscape. The planning and zoning actions of the Town of Richmond and the collaboration with professional organizations such as ASLA and VPA and the business community as evidenced in this charrette is an example of what needs to be done.

The following population and employment projections indicate estimated future demand for additional commercial space in Richmond. (Source: 1993 Dept. Of Health--Low Range).

Population

Downtown Richmond serves residents from other communities who regularly pass through the center of Richmond. Portions of the other nearby towns might push the 2015 population of the service area above 9,000 but not likely above 10,000--approximately a 50% increase in population.

	1996	2015
Richmond	3,914	4,612
Huntington	1,693	2,823 (lower given recent trends)
Bolton (Flats)	500 est	650 est (higher if West Bolton is included)
total	6,107	8,085

Employment

Richmond employment was expected to grow at a similar rate to employment growth in Chittenden County.

	1989	1996	2015
Chittenden County	78,117	85,224	109,778
Richmond, Vermont	764	838	1,084

Between 1996 to 2015, the creation of 246 new jobs are projected for Richmond. The types of jobs and number that will locate in the downtown is not forecast.

The employment and commercial development implications of recent increases of sales tax receipts in Richmond should be evaluated. Retail sales in Richmond, as indicated by sales tax receipts, increased by 185% from 1992 to 1998--the second greatest increase in Chittenden County behind Williston's 229%. This growth is 8 times greater than the county-wide increase of 23% and 40 times greater than the statewide increase of 4.5%.

Historical Context

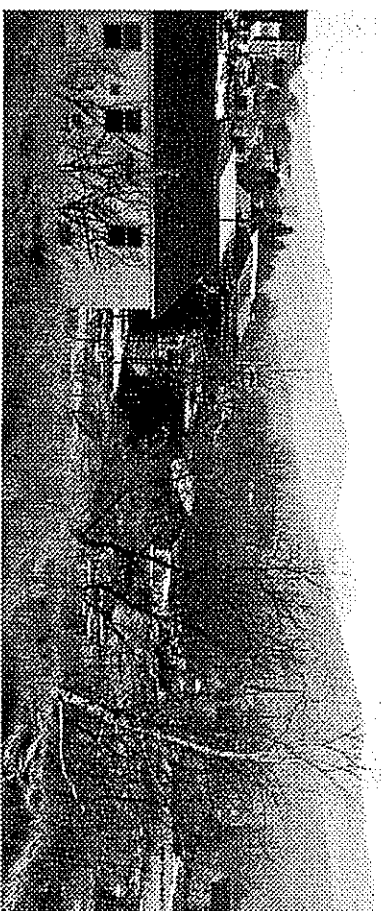
The Condensed Milk Company and the Underwear Factory were the major employers in Richmond in the decades around the turn of the 20th century. Many of the houses and commercial blocks in Richmond date from this period and were built as homes for the people who worked in these businesses. The success of the milk and underwear factories clearly shaped the appearance of Richmond as we know it today.

What remains of the Condensed Milk Company plant also is a clear reminder of the importance and strength of dairying in Richmond and surrounding towns during this time and of the importance of the railroad to the economy. Many farmers began dairying after the 1850s, but the milk had to be made into butter or cheese to bring to market because there was no good way to keep milk from spoiling. By the late 1800s several condensed milk factories were built in Vermont. For the first time this allowed a form of fluid milk to be sent to distant markets. The site of the Vermont Condensed Milk Company in Richmond clearly was selected because of its location next to the railroad tracks, which allowed easy transportation to important urban markets in southern New England and New York.

Two brick buildings on Railroad Street in Richmond are what remain of the Vermont Condensed Milk Company, established in 1896. The former office and warehouse are listed in the State Register of Historic Places (site 0411-15).

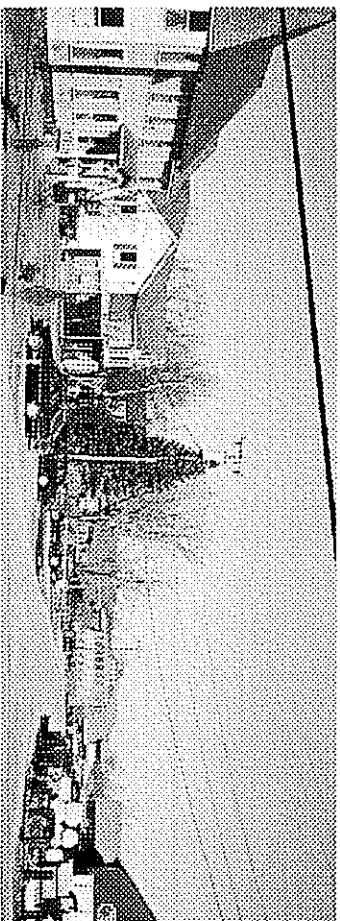
Given what these buildings reflect about the history of Richmond, it may be appropriate to try to integrate them in any project being considered for the area.

Submitted by Elsa Gilbertson, National Register Specialist, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.



Site Description

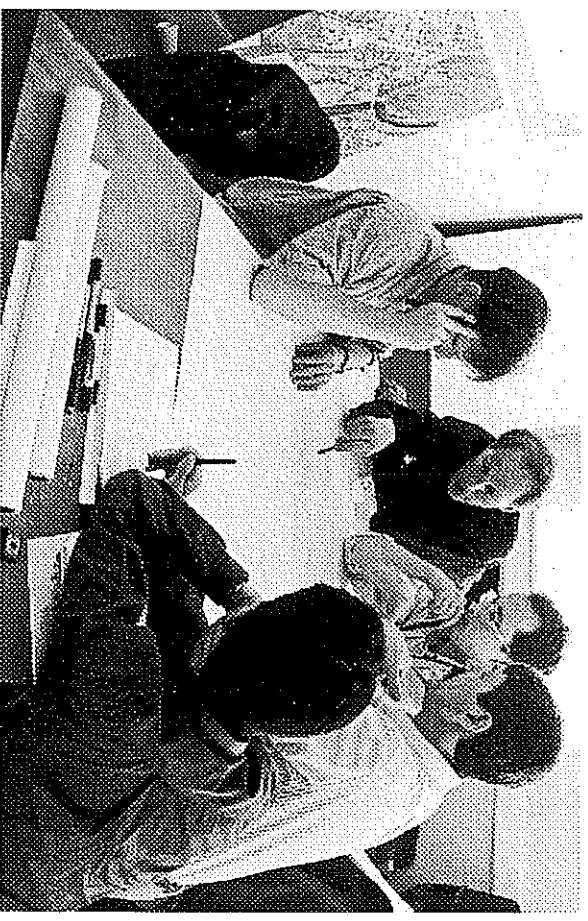
The Railroad Street district is adjacent to the most densely developed area of downtown Richmond--500 feet or 2 minutes walking distance from the traffic light at the Route 2 / Bridge Street intersection. Its non-cohesive development and under-utilized space in the center of Town of Richmond present an opportunity for economic development where it will contribute to the vitality of an existing downtown.



The Approach

Based on a scoping process that included two public meetings, charrette participant feedback and meetings with the landowners, four themes or patterns of commercial development emerged. They are as follows.

- Consistency with historic downtown building and street pattern, spacing, architecture and access;
- Creative use of enhancements and alternative modes of access, i.e. pedestrian, bicycle, jitney, and rail;
- Expanded road access and commercial space to overcome traffic congestion and constraints posed by flood plain, ledges, drainage, and existing/planned buildings.
- Campus of symbiotic businesses.



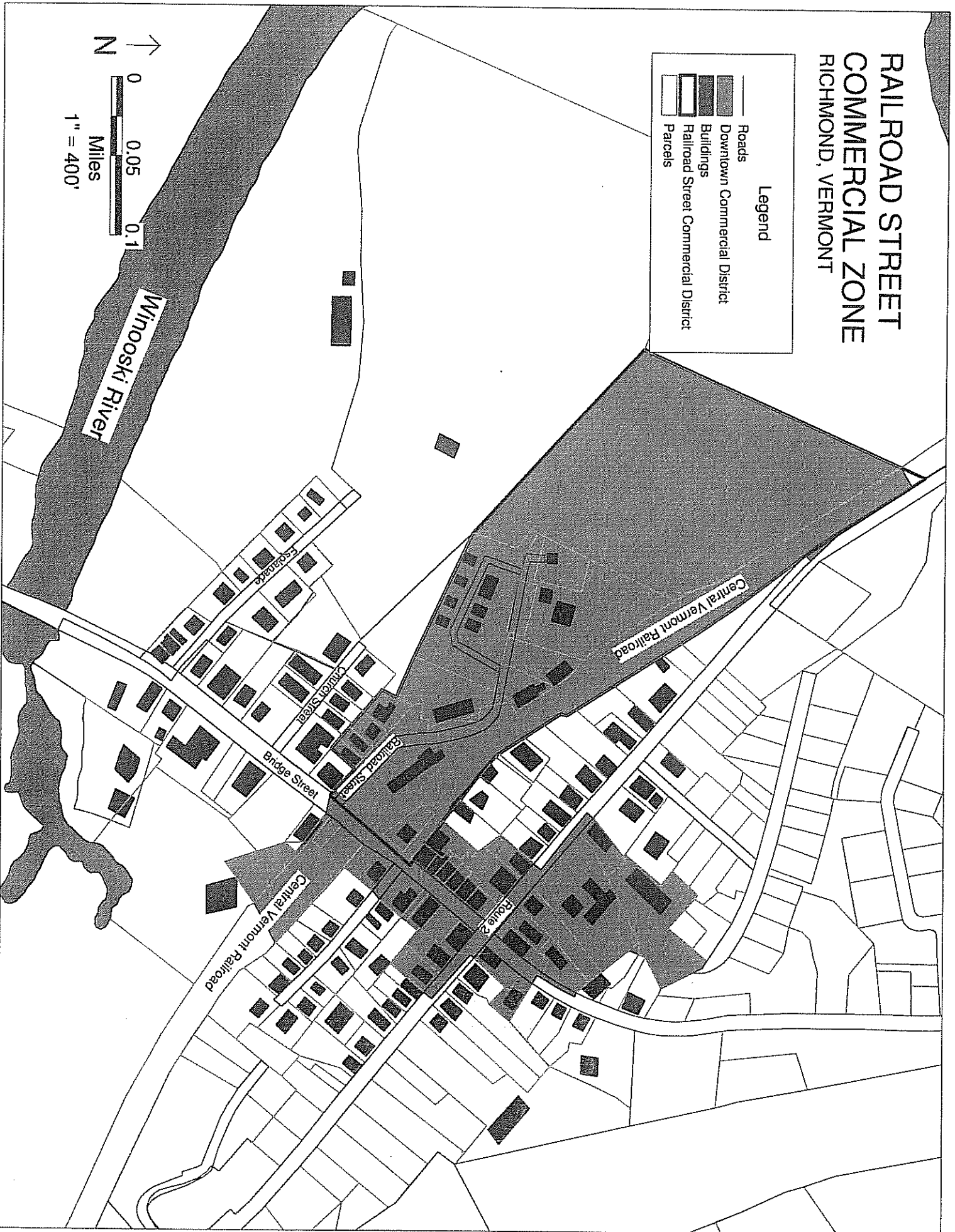
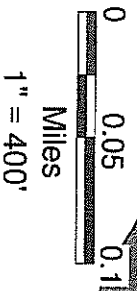
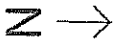
The charrette day consisted of two design phases--the first to explore the four commercial development patterns identified and the second to maximize the advantages of the patterns. During Phase I, each team graphically demonstrated and summarized the advantages and disadvantages of one of the four patterns of commercial development and presented their results during the lunch hour.

During Phase II, all teams prepared designs that maximized the advantages of the four alternative schemes. The intent was to be responsive to 1) human behavior, 2) site conditions, 3) the local and regional context including market realities, and 4) suggestions made at the Richmond public meeting held on April 8, 1998. To a surprising degree, each team voluntarily continued to adhere to the themes which were mandated only for the morning.

RAILROAD STREET COMMERCIAL ZONE RICHMOND, VERMONT

Legend

- Roads
- Downtown Commercial District
- Buildings
- Railroad Street Commercial District
- Parcels



Team A Design

Phase I Intent

The concept behind this alternative is consistency and integration with the historic pattern of buildings and streets. Railroad Street development does not visually compete with or detract from the existing downtown. Streets and sidewalks are extensions of spurs off Bridge Street. Parking is parallel or diagonal. Interconnected sidewalks provide direct access to all building entrances. Deciduous trees shade parked cars and pedestrians in summer and have a calming effect on vehicular traffic.

The spacing, size and architectural features of buildings are similar to those of the existing downtown. The uses are mixed with “basic needs and services” on the street level of buildings, residential units on upper levels of buildings, and offices on street and upper levels.

Phase I Plan

Historically, Railroad Street was the site for processing products and natural resources from surrounding farms and forests and dispatching them by rail. A modern version would be to process information and provide other goods and services for the community’s many home businesses.

Businesses dependent on rail transportation would be located in buildings along the tracks to create a historic feel and business opportunities. A railroad transit center that would match the pattern of downtown buildings (three-story, brick buildings) would provide space for businesses that co-exist with a railroad environment and perhaps provide a small conference center. An “urban” park would provide pedestrian access along Depot Street and perhaps a short-cut for pedestrians to the center of the Railroad Street district via a designated controlled railroad track crossing.

Advantages

Major advantages of the Phase I design included: an opportunity to restore historic buildings such as the proposed transportation center in the historic railroad depot; proposed street extensions and connections to

provide more access to the site; greatly increased parking capacity on the street and behind buildings; and convenient building and sidewalk alignment.

Disadvantages

Major disadvantages are the high cost of restoration; street connections that may disrupt residential neighborhood tranquility; and, the perception that access may be compromised if parking is located behind buildings.

Phase II Plan

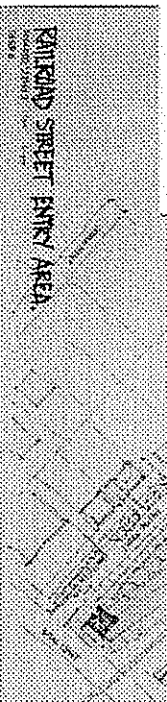
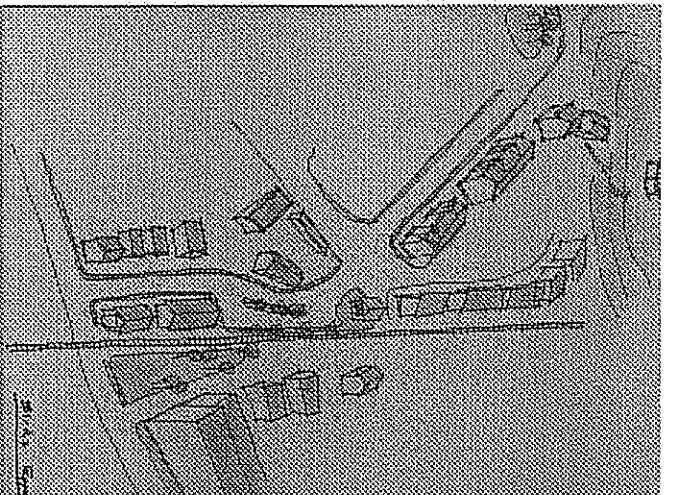
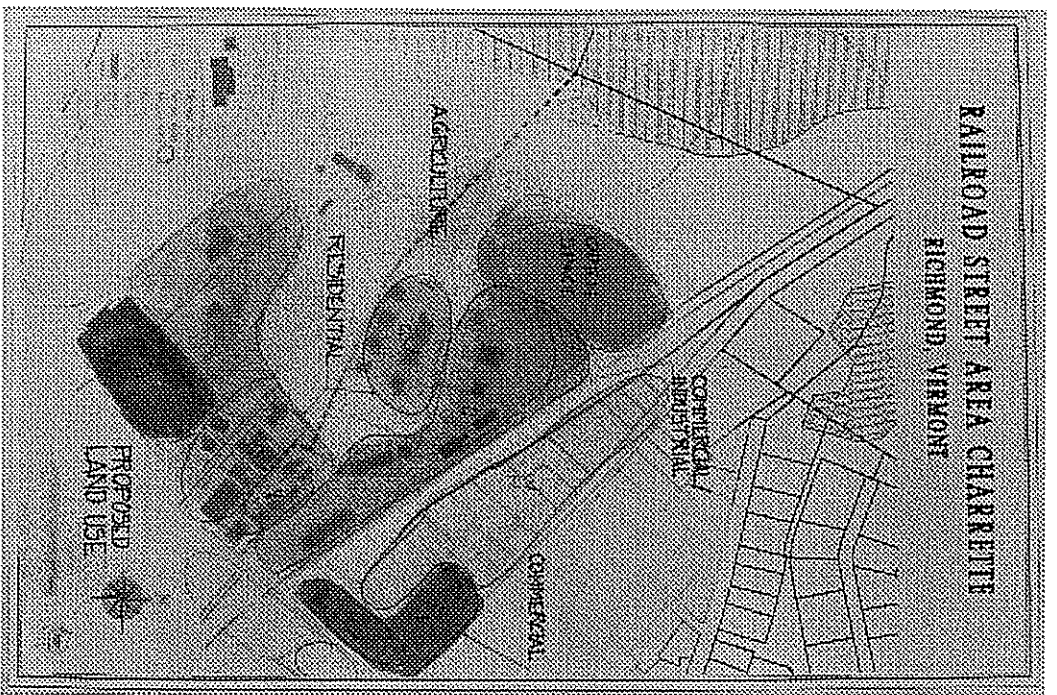
The team adhered to the original concept of Railroad Street as transfer point between rural products and transportation by making the area a support center for area businesses. It would serve the 240 home-based businesses in Richmond and be a proposed business incubator area for new businesses including those outside the home.

Tree-lined streets and sidewalks attract pedestrians from Bridge Street. There is increased vehicle access via a connection to Church Street. Ample parking is provided for a new railroad depot. Green spaces, including a pocket park on Depot Street and the knoll at the end of Railroad Street (opposite ends of the site), provide places for social interaction, public events, and recreation. Commercial development is proposed on the southeast slope, but not the summit, of the knoll.

Because traffic on residential streets may not be desired, the team proposed a one-way traffic flow on Church Street and narrow tree-lined street designs to calm vehicular traffic with continuous sidewalks for pedestrians.

Public Comments

- The design did not seem to retain the two historic buildings.
- Commercial traffic (even one-way) could disrupt the tranquility of Church Street’s residential area.



Team B Design

Phase I Intent

This alternative maximizes the enhancement provisions of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and TEA 21 that will provide Vermont with an additional \$40 million per year for the next 6 years. It responds to suggestions to be creative—"pedestrians and jitneys only" to reduce automobile dependency, generate walkers, re-establish a functioning railroad station serving commuters and tourists, and a 30' wide green way link between Bridge Street and a "gateway park" on the knoll.

Other enhancements include restoration of historic structures and sites, outdoor seating and meeting places interconnected by paths, and landscaped public spaces—a mixed use/commercial area tied together by a web of green infrastructure.

Phase I Plan

People would be drawn by a perfectly straight, realigned Railroad Street and sidewalks bordered on both sides by a succession of shade trees that culminate at a park on the knoll. Commercial development would be concentrated on the railroad side of the street with the south side of Railroad Street shifting to transitional house/office space. The focal point on the knoll serves as a recreation area or gathering place.

Green space along the entire length of Railroad Street, from Bridge Street to the knoll, provides an attractive pedestrian link to the whole site. A multi-modal transportation center in a renovated railroad shed close to Bridge Street would create a node of development, cohesive and connected to the existing downtown. Parking nodes for commercial development areas and the multi-modal transportation center were proposed.

Advantages

Advantages of the design identified by the team included the following: an extended compact village; linked residential areas; links between uses (live, work, play); additional parking; pedestrian friendliness; good use of sight lines to encourage community use of the knoll; opportunity for phased development to occur; and potential site for youth activities (like a skate board park).

Disadvantages

Disadvantages included: industrial and rescue center uses are a potentially dangerous mix with pedestrian and bicycle uses; pedestrian only restriction results in a low use of development potential; proposed railroad crossings pose a danger for pedestrians; the dead end street needs a strong destination point; and existing truck-related businesses in good pedestrian locations may not be willing to re-locate.

Phase II Plan

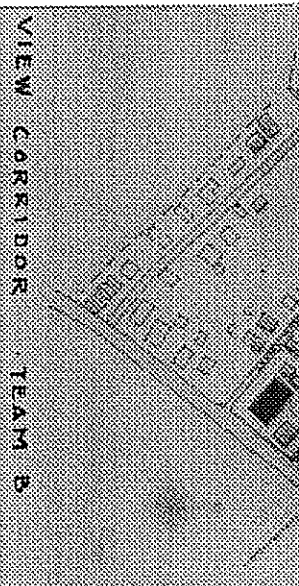
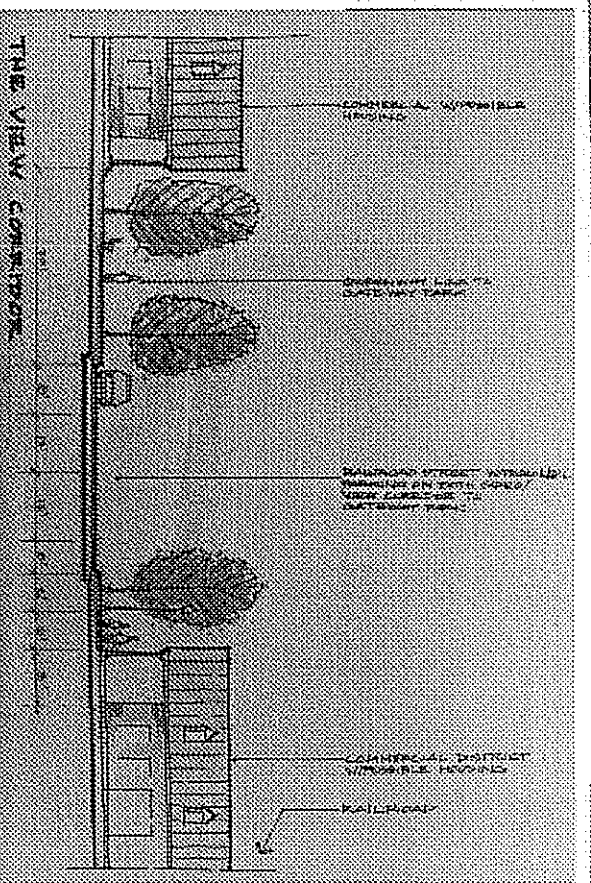
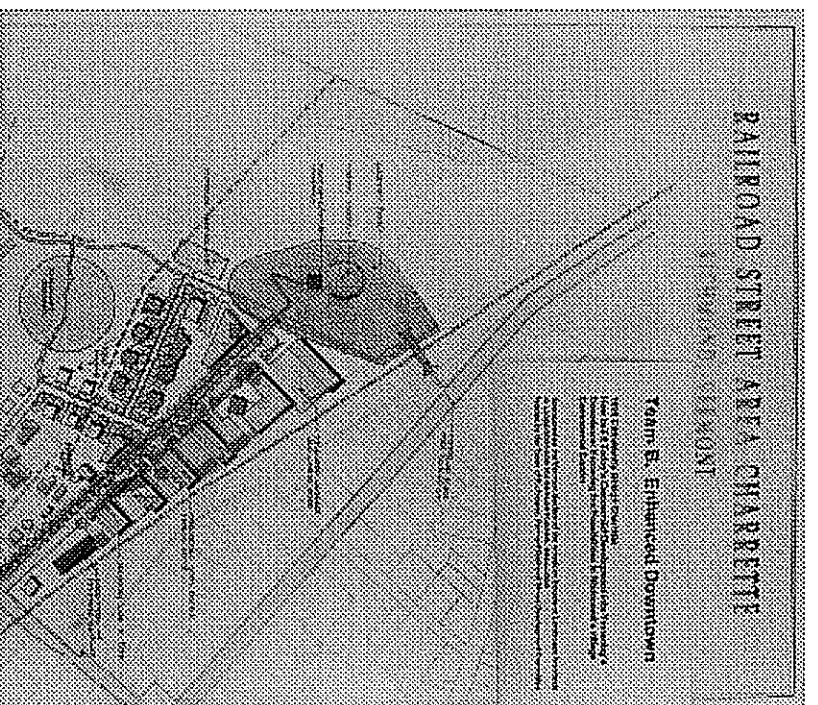
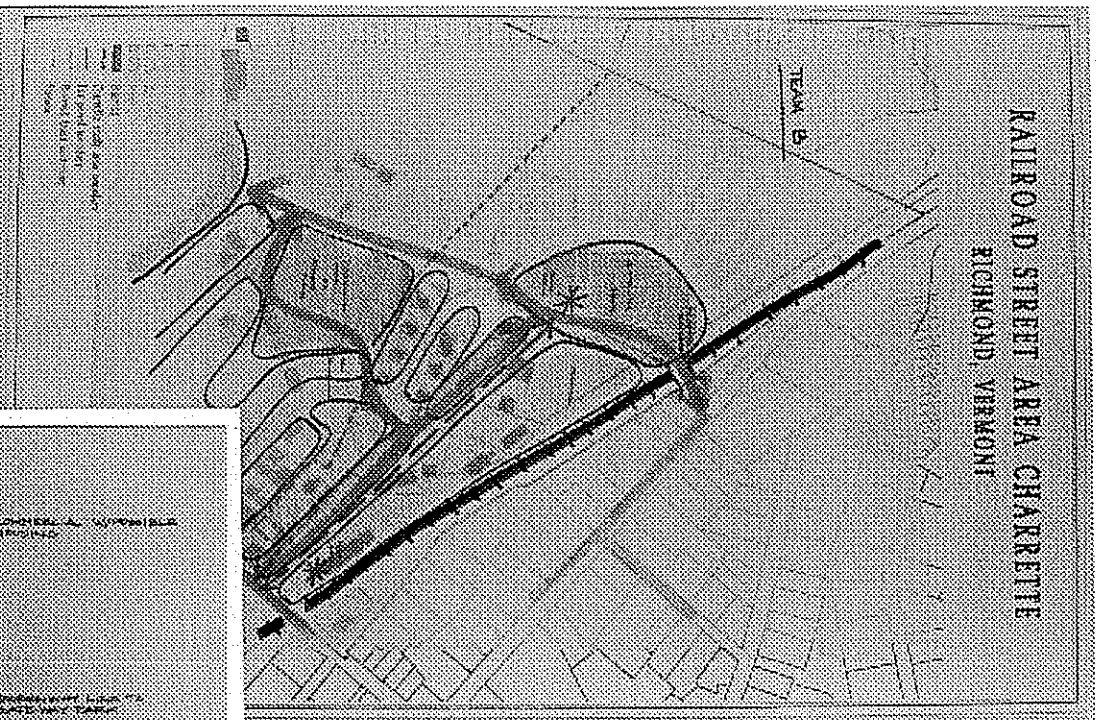
The strategies for the second design follow.

- Uses for the knoll: a "Gateway Park," complete with outdoor theater and bandshell for public events, weddings, etc. that becomes a destination of the linear park and is also accessed by a pedestrian bridge over the railroad.
 - Continuous, enhanced pedestrian access: sidewalks on residential roads, a trail from the existing park to the top of "Gateway Park," the pedestrian bridge over railroads, and a linear park that extends from Bridge Street to the knoll.
 - Preservation of wetlands, floodplain and agricultural lands by maximizing the commercial zone between the railroad and linear park, encouraging a higher density of residential development, and using agricultural lands for community garden space or recreational area expansions.
 - Shielding residential areas: separate commercial and residential uses with the linear park and parking nodes in the commercial area.
 - Encourage multi-modal transportation: a multi-modal center near the Bridge and Railroad Street intersection as well as a proposed shuttle.
- The team proposed re-locating the home building supply center and rescue center to address incompatibilities with pedestrian use. The short-term expense of moving the businesses would be compensated in the long-term by 1) locating the rescue center closer to the Bridge Street arterial and 2) locating the entire home building supply center next to railroad transportation. The home supply store would have a bigger, better-designed space and would serve as a second destination point on the end of the street.

Public Comments

No comments on this plan were received.

Team B Design



Team C Design

Phase I Intent

This alternative maximizes commercial opportunities and vehicular access as well as making more land available for future commercial development west and north of the knoll, compensating for the constraints south and east of the knoll like existing and permitted uses (home building supply store, rescue center, Champlain housing project) and natural constraints (ledges, floodplain and poorly drained areas).

This alternative also demonstrates ways to reduce Bridge Street traffic congestion and provide convenient, multiple access routes to visible, plentiful parking.

Phase I Plan

The team thoroughly explored a wide range of vehicular access and land use options:

- Roadway connections from Route 2 (by the cemetery curve) to Bridge Street and the Huntington Road corner to bypass the Bridge Street/Route 2 intersection.
- Road connections between Church, Esplanade and Railroad Streets.
- Commercial campus space for businesses like Harrington's, a medical or fitness center, and a large grocery.
- A future site for an expanded elementary school.
- Green space to separate residential from commercial areas.
- A knoll free of development in lieu of a pedestrian trail system.

Advantages

Advantages of the design described by the team included: more access and linkages; less traffic at Bridge Street/Route 2 intersection; additional parking; large-scale commercial development project; more land available for residential, recreational, educational, and commercial uses; and a buffer between residential and commercial areas.

Disadvantages

Disadvantages included: the high expense involved with infrastructure costs; filling of the floodplain and negatively impacting the agricultural lands; blurring the village edge; competition of proposed development with existing downtown due to distance of proposed development to downtown; and traffic congestion and hazards at proposed Route 2 intersections and railroad crossings.

Phase II Plan

The team proposed a large commercial building that could function as a grocery store, co-op or farmers' market, office building, medical or fitness center, a railroad station, and/or elderly housing. Ample parking was located in front to provide plentiful, easy-to-find vehicular access.

The residential areas of Church and Esplanade Streets are gridded out to provide more housing units and direct road access between them and Railroad Street. The residential areas are shielded from the commercial areas of the site with a green belt and the team kept the knoll as a park with pedestrian path to connect to existing recreation fields.

A future connector from Railroad Street to Route 2 was proposed as well as space northwest of the knoll for future commercial area or school.

Public Comments

- A vehicular by-pass could add a traffic snarl on Route 2.
- Street connections between Railroad, Church, and Esplanade Streets could result in commercial traffic disrupting the current tranquility and safety of a downtown residential neighborhood.

[illegible]

Team D Design

Phase I Intent

This alternative creates a “campus of light industry (high tech, clean, high wage) that draws symbiotic businesses because of location or services available.” The campus is achieved by incorporating a landscape center, greenhouse, open-air market, and specialty food store. Improved road and railroad access and convenient parking are important.

Phase I Plan

The team stretched the existing village downtown to the site by using architectural elements similar to those on Bridge Street and providing a train station. The team had many discussions about potential uses, values and linkages the site could potentially provide including a train station for transportation of goods and people; the relationship to the agricultural lands through a farmers’ market or food co-op; a space for a corporate headquarters as a destination point; a space in the village for heavier commercial development, i.e. lumber yards; and a crafts industry/incubator site.

Since the hardware store/lumberyard does not require convenient pedestrian access, the team proposed to move it towards the end of the street. More pedestrian-dependent businesses such as food stores, co-ops or green markets would be located at the home supply location. The plan also includes agricultural development and/or greenhouse space that would be symbiotic with the food and home building supply stores.

The team compared using the knoll for development with road access versus keeping it a green space.

Advantages

Advantages to the design are as follows: a proposed train station with direct access to bus, taxi and parking serves as an intermodal transportation center; downtown location will encourage pedestrian access; existing agricultural lands are compatible with farmer’s market, food store and specialty food processing businesses; residential growth area is provided; and access between residential growth and commercial areas are “green” streets that would discourage or preclude motor vehicle traffic.

Disadvantages

If “green” street is used by motor vehicles, tranquility of existing or expanded residential neighborhoods could be disrupted.

Phase II Plan

In their final design, the team acknowledged the variety of existing, sometimes conflicting factors involved with this site’s potential development. They felt the historic character of Bridge Street and several on-site buildings should be preserved, and the rights of existing residences, businesses and other properties should be respected. Although the area is one of the few available locations in town for commercial development, the team found that floodplain, wetlands, agricultural land and gateway views all restrict the total development potential.

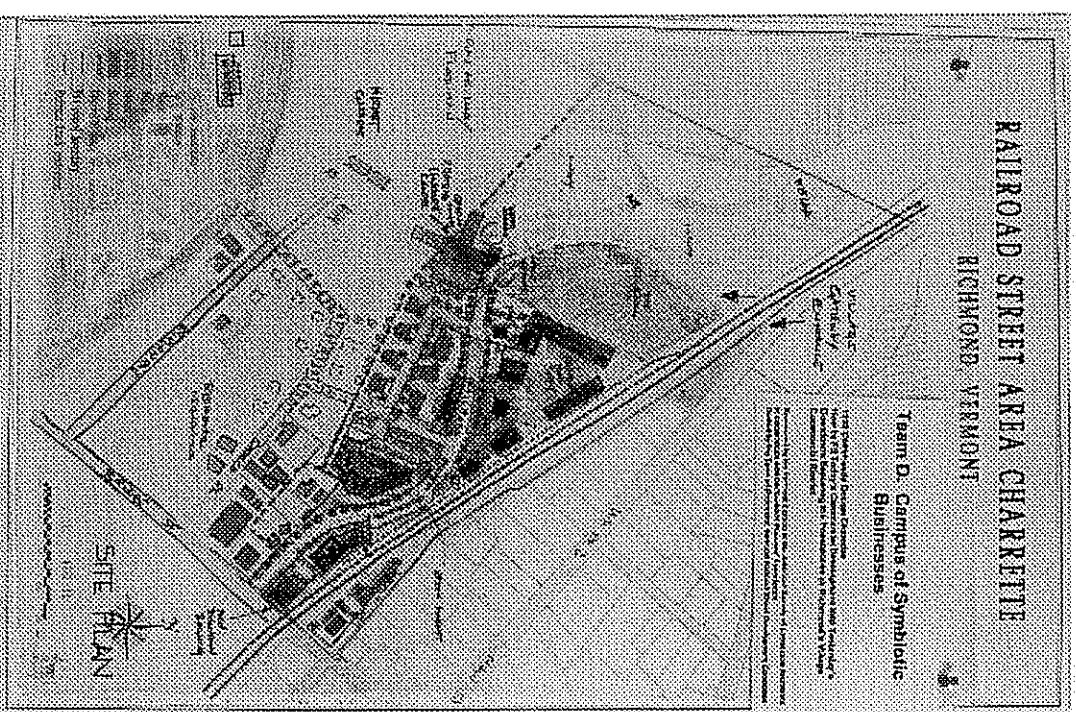
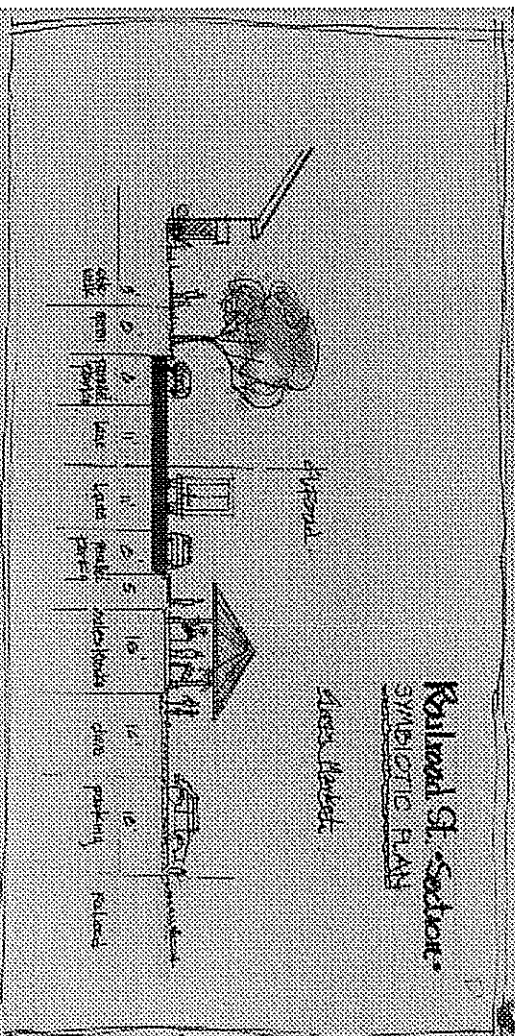
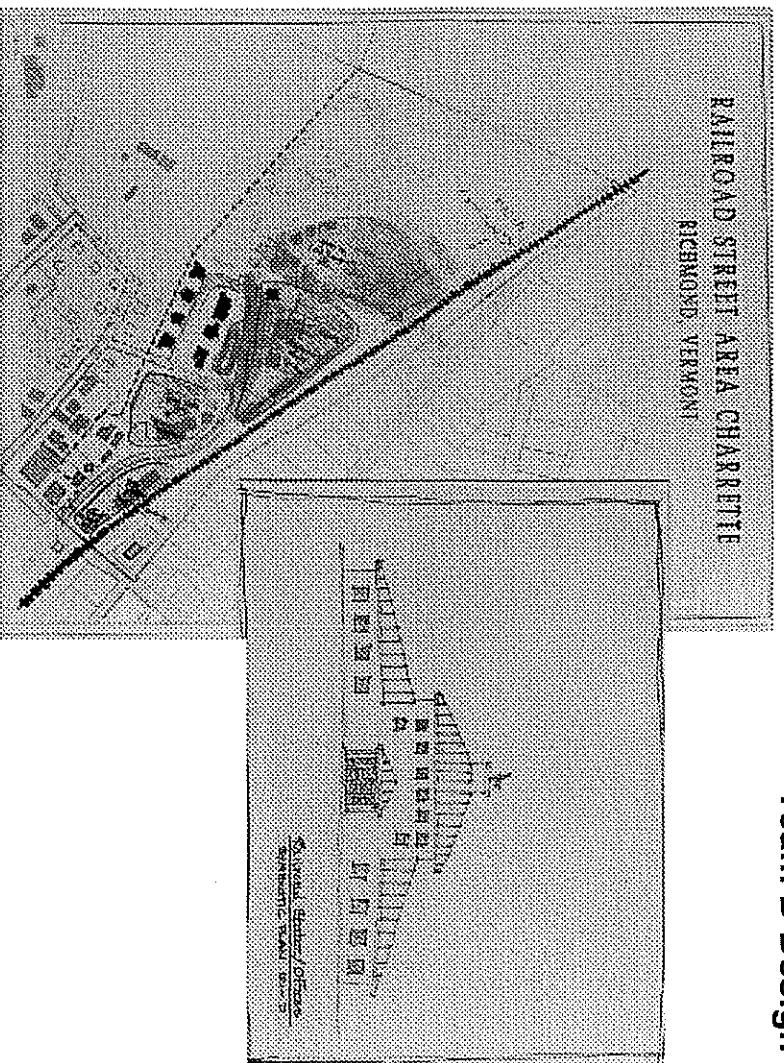
The design recognized the various influences by providing for reasonable, but not maximum, development levels. The rocky knoll, prominently visible along the Route 2 approach to the village, is preserved. An area below the knoll, shown as being outside the floodplain, is preserved due to the team’s expectation that development would not survive wetland standards. With sizeable open space areas to the west, development is maximized at the eastern end of the site. Building front setbacks are minimal, similar to existing Bridge Street buildings. Buildings are tightly spaced and on-street parking reduces the need for large parking lots.

Proposed uses were those that would be supported by Richmond and nearby communities. Basic commodities, such as food and building materials, were featured in a scheme that could be termed “symbiotic.” A large rear area is occupied by a home center, including the re-located hardware store, lumberyard, etc. Closer to the front, at a highly visible area easily accessible by both pedestrian and vehicular traffic, is an open-air green market along with a specialty foods store. A retail building is proposed at the corner of Bridge and Railroad Streets, and a railroad station is proposed just behind it. Greenhouses and gardens will bridge the gap between commercial development and agricultural land at the rear of the site.

Public Comments

- Confusion about the design’s street or path connections between proposed commercial and residential developments was clarified as a pedestrian link that could evolve into a street if more housing is built.
- The buildings in the design reflected historic railroad structures.

Team D Design



Capacity of Site to Accommodate Jobs

Average employment densities in the US provide a basis for calculating how many jobs can be accommodated on the site. The commercial portion of the four designs averaged 9.5 acres: Team A, 8.25 acres; Team B, 8.25; Team C, 9.5 (+ 9.0 option); and Team D, 12.0 acres.

If Site is Served by Public Sewer System

	Jobs per		Additional	
	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Jobs</u>	<u>9 Acres</u>	<u>Total Jobs</u>
Manufacturing	18	171	162	333
Retail	18	171	162	333
Office	30	285	270	555

If Site is Not Served by Public Sewer System

	Jobs per		Additional	
	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Jobs</u>	<u>9 Acres</u>	<u>Total Jobs</u>
Manufacturing	9	85	81	166
Retail	9	85	81	166
Office	9	85	81	166

Example: With a 9.5 acres commercial site size, 171 to 285 jobs could be accommodated if the site is served by the public sewer system. If not served by public sewer, 85 jobs could be accommodated on the site.

If the 9 acres designated by Team C for possible future development is added, the total number of jobs accommodated if the site is served by the public sewer system would be 333 to 555. If not served by public sewer, the total number of jobs would be 166.

Thus, the 9.5 acre site with a public sewer would accommodate 70-116% of the 246 new jobs projected by 2015 (see page 3) or 35% of the 246 new jobs if the site is not served by public sewer. With the additional 9 acres designated by Team C, the site would accommodate 135-225% with sewer system and 67% without.

Capacity of Proposed Buildings to Accommodate Jobs

Average square feet of building per job in the US provide a basis for determining the number of square feet of commercial building space will be needed to accommodate the projected new jobs.

Building	Square Feet		Projected	Required
	<u>Per Job</u>	<u>New Jobs</u>		
Manufacturing	500 s.f.	246	123,000 s.f.	
Retail	300 s.f.	246	73,800 s.f.	
Office	300 s.f.	246	73,800 s.f.	

At present, there are 25,000 square feet of underutilized commercial building footprints in the Railroad Street commercial zone.

The four designs developed at the charrette resulted in total square footages of building footprints given in the table below. With a mixture of residential and commercial use of second and third floor space, the total square footage of commercial space could be twice that of the footprints.

<u>Team</u>	<u>Building Footprint</u>	<u>Commercial Floor Space</u>
A	64,000 s.f.	128,000 s.f.
B	60,000 s.f.	120,000 s.f.
C	47,000 s.f.*	94,000 s.f.*
D	90,000 s.f.	180,000 s.f.
Avg.	65,250 s.f.	130,500 s.f.

* Could be almost doubled with area designated for possible future development between knoll and Route 2.

Thus, the commercial building space depicted in the four designs would accommodate 76-146% of the space needed per manufacturing jobs or 127-244% of the space needed for retail or office jobs.

Design Comparisons

	Team A	Team B	Team C	Team D
Depot Street	Expand existing building to front entire Bridge Street. Urban pocket park behind.	No change.	Small new building at corner of Bridge Street and railroad tracks.	Parking between tracks and Depot Street.
North Corner of Bridge and Railroad Streets	Major new structure similar to existing railroad shed with focal point tower on corner.	New commercial building of same scale as buildings to the south.	No change.	New “downtown” building.
South Corner of Bridge and Railroad Streets	Residential/office space.	Greenway link in front of commercial/housing space.	Parking lot for railroad station.	No change.
Streets	Existing center line results in new vistas/surprises; connects to Church Street	Straight—dramatic boulevard culminating at knoll, no intervening buildings, connects to Church Street (closed linkage of new & old housing) 8/12'+12/8' (2+2 for bike).	Curved--Connects to Route 2, Church and Esplanade Streets, and park.	Curved--narrow street or 10' wide multi-purpose paved path connection to Church and Esplanade Streets and park.
Parking	Behind buildings and on street parallel and diagonal (like existing Bridge St):	Beside buildings (between street and tracks), and south of street	In front of buildings	On street beside buildings, behind buildings and in front of buildings.
Railroad Station	New landmark building, midway down street, south of tracks.	Multi-modal in renovated train shed in front of Bridge Street.	Renovated train shed with parking to Bridge Street.	New landmark building, second one in from Bridge Street.
Hardware/Home Supply Store	Same location with parking and warehouse behind.	Relocated to base of knoll and tracks.	Same location with parking in front and warehouse between Champlain Housing and loading yard.	Relocated to base of knoll and tracks.

	Team A	Team B	Team C	Team D
Historic Buildings	Neither of the 2 historic buildings were preserved.	Preserved the eastern building.	Neither of the 2 historic buildings were preserved.	Both of the historic buildings were preserved.
Rescue Center	Not shown on plan.	Relocated to existing home supply location.	Relocated to front of commercial structure (proposed grocery, market.)	Relocated in front of home supply.
Existing Residences	Green space buffers commercial (home supply) and Champlain Housing & Church St houses.	5 new residences between Champlain Housing and Church St.	28 new residences between Champlain Housing and Church / Esplanade St. Tree barrier between Champlain Housing & home supply loading yard.	"The rights of existing residences should be respected" but "Street connections are provided to existing residences."
Green Space	Knoll--commercial buildings built into southeast slope only and trail to gathering place with vista. Tree-lined sidewalks (6' tree planting strip between 22' street and 5' sidewalks on both sides of street.)	Knoll--no commercial buildings, "gateway park" with bandstand, gazebo for weddings, outdoor theater. Tree-lined boulevard (6' planting) and 6' sidewalks (trees on both sides of south sidewalk). Trail in 30'-wide greenway links residences, park and knoll.	Knoll--no commercial buildings, connected by path to river park and over tracks to Route 2. Tree-lined street with no sidewalk. Trees in parking areas.	Knoll--no commercial buildings ("the rocky knoll, prominently visible along the Route 2 approach to village, is preserved."). Community/water gardens and nursery below knoll. 8' tree planting strip between street and 5' sidewalk.
Area Between Knoll and Route 2	Railroad tracks leave no space for access road intersection off Route 2.	Pedestrian bridge over railroad tracks creates pedestrian access from Route 2 to the knoll. Concerned that poorly drained soils would prevent development.	Designated for possible future development. Would almost double the size of commercial district.	Could not find a workable intersection and vehicular access from Route 2 across railroad track into commercial zone.

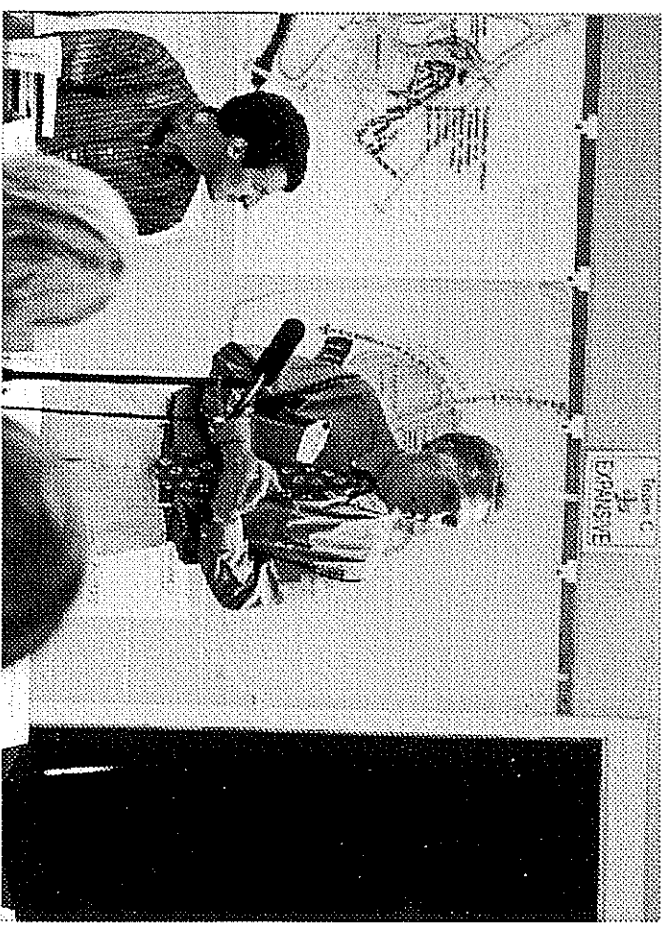
Additional Public Comments

Public input was critical to the entire charrette process. Public meetings were held both before and immediately after the charrette to solicit public comments.

Richmond's Selectboard members attended the charrette and were invaluable to the process. They gave critiques of the designs following the Phase I plans so that design teams could respond to anticipated public needs in their Phase II designs.

The following comments pertain to some or all of the designs.

- There was significant concern about commercial traffic on residential streets.
- Is it possible to provide needed access to Railroad Street and create connections between the Lake Champlain Housing project and the Church Street residential area without routing commercial traffic to Church or Esplanade Streets?
- Features common to all four plans included: the knoll as primarily "open," the need for attraction to draw people to west end of the site, more residential area, and a transportation center in Railroad Street entry area.
- Multi-modal transportation improvements may serve as an incentive for development at the end of Railroad Street.
- Commercial activity on both sides of the street is needed to lure people into the area.
- A lack of input from Bridge Street businesses is a concern.
- "Car corrals" in front of buildings are deterrents to pedestrians.
- These schemes provided a combination of local input and new ideas.
- To relocate or not to relocate the rescue center building.
- Is it feasible to make a road connection to Route 2 at the north end of the commercial district?
- To save or not save the historic Vermont Condensed Milk Company?



Possible Next Steps

Next steps in the Railroad Street development process respond to the following circumstances according to Joss Besse with the Vermont Downtown Program in the Agency of Commerce and Community Affairs.

1) Downtown Richmond is a “sub-regional center” as it draws close to 10,000 people from Richmond, Bolton, Huntington, and the southern part of Jericho. It has a relatively high amount of economic activity and opportunity.

2) Because of Richmond’s location in Chittenden County, development will come to the town in some form.

3) Richmond has a positive political environment, has been proactive in planning for development, and, therefore, has the opportunity to focus on shaping it as opposed to let anything happen.

In the public meeting at the conclusion of the Charrette Joss Besse recommended that the next steps should consider the following strategies.

1) Most towns are looking for the project that will turn their downtown around. Downtowns are complicated and it takes more than one public works project to make them successful. It takes time, it takes effort and it takes a master plan to make things happen.

2) Make a decision. Many interesting ideas were generated at the charrette-- “which option is best?” solicits other ideas-- “what haven’t you thought of?” There are several alternatives proposed, but for the results of this charrette to be useful, the community must now consider the alternatives and decide what you want. Only then can you move forward and develop the strategies that will bring the desired development.

3) Options for making it happen include the following.

a. The group of property owners (who may or may not want to develop the property and may or may not want to band together to make a unified development project).

b. Community development corporations (CDC) are independent corporations, usually non-profits and have good links to municipalities.

c. Investors/developers, whether they be a group or individual.

4) Make sure that the town plan and zoning are clear about what is desired (and support it), and what is not desired. Tools that the town can use to control the development desired include: design reviews, site plan reviews, and conditional use permits. Clear guidance for development will give potential developers the degree a certainty needed by an investor. Key components in making decisions at the town level include the municipal plan and the land use by-laws that regulate development.

5) There are some financial incentives that could help bring desired development to the area. At the local level, tax stabilization could be given. Bonding could be sought for the public improvements that would make the area more attractive for development, or a Tax Increment Financing District could be created to pay off bonds for the public improvements. At the state level, application may be made to the Vermont Economic Progress Council for help with these incentives. VEPC also offers a number of direct incentives to a individual business, using guidelines that are very supportive of the types of development Richmond is seeking.

6) Other resources include the Lake Champlain Housing Development Corporation (for home-occupation development), the Economic Progress Council (has a variety of incentives for commercial development), the Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation, etc. Most important: “Make the decision” because the clearer you are about what you want, the more likely you will get the help you need.

Appendices



Design Teams

Team A

Joss Besse..... Vermont Downtowns Program, DHCA, ACCD
Nat Goodhue..... Landscape Architect, Goodhue Landscape Design
Mark Kane..... Planner, Chris Dunn Associates
Jay Ladd..... Planner, Chittenden County RPC
Terence Lee..... Landscape Architect, Office of Dan Kiley
Steve Libby..... Historic Preservation, Prsv. Trust of VT
Ernie Ruskie..... Architect, Ruskie & Knauf Associates

Team B

Jim Donovan..... Landscape Architect, Lamoreaux, Stone, O'Leary
Jim Feinson..... Economic Development, Railroad St Committee
Polly McMurtrey..... Architect, DCAA
Lani Ravin..... Planner, VAOT
Ken Sweetser..... Planner, Town of Morrisville
Miles Weston..... Landscape Architect, LandWorks
Michael Wisniewski... Architect, Lake Champlain Housing Corp

Team C

Peter Bourgois..... Landscape Architect, Cavenish Partnership
Sharon Murray..... Planner, Community Planning Associates
Carl Parker..... Economic Development, Railroad St Committee
Joe Segale..... Planner, Chittenden County MPO
Joe Weith..... Planner, Town of South Burlington
David White..... Economic Development, D. White Associates

Team D

Fred Dunnington..... Planner, Town of Middlebury
Diane Gayer..... Architect, Consultant
Peter Hart..... Planner, Consultant
Kathleen Ryan..... Landscape Architect, Office of K. Ryan
David Spitz..... Planner, Consultant

Resource Organizations/Individuals

Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (Joe Segale)
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (Jay Appleton, Art Hogan)
Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation (Frank Cioffi)
Lake Champlain Housing Development Corporation (Jay Ladd)
Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce (Betsy O'Neill)
Orton Family Foundation (William Shouldice IV)
Property Owners
Richmond Railroad Street Development Committee (Anne O'Brien)
Richmond Selectboard (Fran Thomas, Chair)
Vermont Forum on Sprawl (John Ewing, Beth Humstone)
Vermont Downtowns Program (Joss Besse)

Town of Richmond

Railroad Street Development Committee

Tom Ayres
Joss Besse
Virginia Clarke
Robert Goetz
Michael Gravelin
G.C. Morris
Ann O'Brien
Ron Rodjenski
Steven Schneider

Selectboard Members

Richard Barrett
Virginia Clarke
Robert Goetz
Ellen Gurwitz Ayers
Frances Thomas (Chair)

Wednesday, April 29, 1998 Agenda

8:30 am Charrette Check-In. Town Center Meeting Room, 203 Bridge Street, Richmond

9:00 am Welcome by Frances Thomas, Select Board Chair, Town of Richmond.

9:10 am Site Visit guided by Anne O'Brien, Railroad Street Development Committee.



10:10 am Orientation by Nat Goodhue, Past President, Vermont ASLA.

10:20 am The Big Picture: Downtown Community Development Act and Vermont Downtown Program by Joss Besse.

10:40 am The Richmond Picture by Virginia Clarke, Richmond Select Board member and former Planning Commission Chair.

10:50 am The Design Program by Vermont ASLA representative.

11:00 am

Design Phase I. Each team prepares a design based on one of the following distinct schemes:

- 1) Consistency with historic downtown,
- 2) Innovative enhancements and transportation alternatives,
- 3) Expanded road access and commercial space, and
- 4) Campus of symbiotic businesses.

12:15 pm

Lunch time presentations by each team explaining advantages and disadvantages of alternative schemes. Critique by Selectboard members.

1:00 pm

Design Phase II. All teams prepare designs that maximize the advantages of the four alternative schemes. These designs should be responsive to 1) human behavior, 2) site conditions, 3) the local and regional context including market realities, and 4) suggestions made at the Richmond public meeting held on April 8, 1998 (see attached).

5:00 pm

Adjourn for break and dinner at local restaurants.

6:30 pm

Designs on public display at the Camels Hump Middle School.

7:00 pm

Public Meeting moderated by Peter Bourgois, Vermont ASLA Community Outreach Chair.

Opening Comments on how the charrette fits into the overall picture of what we want to achieve in Vermont by John Ewing, Vermont Forum on Sprawl (10 min.).

Presentations by design teams (4 teams x 15 min. = 60 min.).

Public comments (40 min.).

Closing Remarks: Where do we go from here? by Joss Besse, Vermont Downtown Program, Vermont D. H. C. A. (10 min.).

Public Comments Received on April 8, 1998 Regarding Design Charrette Project

(Characteristics identified as desirable to be included in designs. Organized by topic.)

VILLAGE CHARACTER

village extension
bring it "into" the town center
buildings which hark to the character of existing
street lights like town center
well-designed and attractive
environment compatible with scale
and character of town
historical reference
village focal point
strong historical design ethic

ARTS & CRAFTS

sculpture
space for artisans and craftspeople
gallery
craft store
artist studio spaces

RETAIL

existing storage barns
small computertype business like Kinko's
business
business
small businesses
small shops
drug store
small Vermontowned stores
grocery

small commercial (pharmacy, barber shop)

bookstore
book/music store
book store
small shops
hardware store
natural food store
shops
small shops
drug store
variety store
small commercial activities
car wash
retail shops
car wash
movie theater
grocery store
pharmacy
businesses
supermarket
small businesses
more specialty shops
pedestrian mall
health food store
bookshop
commercial use
market

FOOD-BASED BUSINESSES

restaurants
another good restaurant
groceries
restaurant

supermarket on a small sizesimilar to Lantman's in Hinesburg
cafe

Haagan-Daz store
restaurants
Boutique type shopping area
open air market
restaurant
bakery
cafe
outdoor cafe
ethnic cuisine
brew pub
gourmet food and wine store
high end coffee shop
more restaurants
restaurants
restaurant
open air market (enclosed for winter)
brewery /restaurant
grocery store

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

physician's office
office building
offices
incubator stores/office space
offices
business incubator space
banks
professional offices
office space
professional offices
medical building

some businesses providing essential service

MANUFACTURING

small manufacturing
"clean" industry
light industrial
campus-style light industry
(computer, food processing, environment, etc) place that draws like or symbiotic businesses because of location and services available

RESIDENTIAL

housing elderly within walking apartments above offices
housing
home business space
elderly housing
no low cost housing
houses/stores
housing-2nd level
housing
"mixed-use" housing

ACCESS/PARKING

pedestrian walkway
wide sidewalk, possibly covered
pedestrian friendly spaces
sidewalks
wrought iron fence along tracks
walkway
bicycle paths
brick sidewalk
pedestrian safety walking
sidewalks
parking
parking lot
through connector to route 2
sidewalks
street improvements
pedestrian friendly
multi-/inter-modal access
walkways/path, sidewalks, etc
pedestrian ways
designated parking for rescue
next to Bridge Street
pedestrian accessible i.e. lots of
walking spaces
parking for grocery store
creative access pedestrian only, jitney

TRAIN-RELATED

development of the RR stop again
functional railroad station
train station (in use)
RR stop and depot
train stop
future room for commuter train stop
train stop to Burlington to Montpelier
train station

train depot/commuter stop
railroad station (functioning)
RR passenger terminal for commuter
service to Montreal and Burlington
train station and passenger service

GREEN SPACE

trees
green space
some open space for playing, sitting,
visiting outdoors
gazebo for meetings
path with nice park benches
man-made waterfall and garden
green space
more green
gardens
trees
stone wall
green ground cover
trees
garden plots
trees
grass
landscaped where possible
trees
open space/green
small town green
trees-not pavement
hedges
trees
vegetable garden
playground / benches
small park
American elms lining street
fountains
beautiful park benches and flowers

tennis courts nearby
benches
bandstand
green spaces
more greenery/trees, plants, flowers
lots of trees with a lighted stone
trees
flowers
views of farmland
trees
lots of greenery incorporated into
built spaces
trees and sidewalks
connection to agriculture land at south
and west sides of area
park

RECREATION/ COMMUNITY SPACE

tennis courts
gathering place
tennis courts
gym/neighborhood recreation
area/tennis courts
sports area (courts, etc.)
bicycle access
health center
movie house/bowling
night life
events
festivals
meeting places
community center
day and evening activity
people playing chess
children

OTHER

planned development
retail/commercial shops that support
Richmond Building Supply
jobs that have livable wages
successful businesses
different levels
nice buildings
minimum development
more "defined" space/cohesiveness
panoramic viewing opportunity
hustle and bustle
public spaces
more employment
jobs-so people don't leave town to
work, the more people who work
here, the more sense of
community there is
bulldoze the old post office
productivity
happy people vibrancy
distance of stores
mix of interesting buildings
commercial /residential/ office/ public
uses
an elegant inn on the hill
no power lines!
thought-out signs

